

This Week in Congress

October 9, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." As Congress is out of session this month, I am spending time in communities across the state visiting with Kansans. If you enjoy receiving this weekly email newsletter, please feel free to forward it on to others who may find it useful.

Hosting Eighth Veterans' Forum in Junction City

This week, I hosted a veterans' forum in Junction City. Jason McClellan, Interim Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Wichita, and Dr. Rajeez Trehan, Acting Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospitals in Topeka and Leavenworth, joined me to provide updates to veterans about benefits, health care and other veteran-related issues.

The veterans provided many compliments, but also reminded me through their concerns that more work is needed to combat the high backlog of pending benefits cases. I appreciate the people who were able to attend and for the feedback we received, as well as the employees at the Municipal Building in Junction City for their hospitality and use of the gymnasium. Thank you also to Mayor Terry Heldstab for introducing me at the beginning of the forum.

Inviting EPA Administrator to Kansas to Discuss Recent Restrictions on Dust

I have asked the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Stephen Johnson, to join me in Kansas to see the implications of the EPA's recent ruling on coarse particulate matter, commonly known as dust. Despite an EPA statement that the health risks of exposure to particulate matter in rural areas are inconclusive, the EPA now plans to regulate dust from agricultural production.

This ruling could have a significant impact on agriculture in the United States. I would like Administrator Johnson to have a firsthand look at agriculture in Kansas and see how this will adversely affect our farmers and ranchers. For full text of the press release on this issue, [click here](#).

Visiting the Smoky Hill Joint Training Center in Salina

On Tuesday, I joined officials from the Kansas National Guard, Kansas Air National Guard, Kansas Regional Training Institute, Smoky Hill Joint Training, U.S. Army and the Salina Airport Authority to discuss current and future training opportunities at the Smoky Hill Joint Training Center located west of Salina. The Smoky Hill Joint Training Center is the opportune location to do joint training because of the available airspace, access to the Salina Regional Airport and the proximity to Fort Riley. I also had the opportunity to learn about unmanned aerial vehicles and how this new technology is being utilized in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not only can this technology be used for military purposes, but it can be used for civilian applications including search and rescue, emergency damage assessment, pipeline inspections and for Homeland Security border patrol. Thank you to John Armbrust for putting this visit together.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

This month is National Domestic Violence Awareness month. Though we have made great strides in bringing attention to the tragedy of domestic violence, more than four million Americans continue to find themselves victims of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. I wanted to use this month to bring awareness to the ongoing issue and to commend those who work everyday to help victims of domestic violence, especially those who work in the nine service areas of the First District - Dodge City, Emporia, Garden City, Great Bend, Hays, Hutchinson, Liberal, Salina and Ulysses.

This week, I visited programs in Salina and Hays. While in Salina I met with Vera Johnson, Executive Director of New Start Family Life Skills, and with representatives from the Salina Area United Way and the Salina Regional Health Center. New Start Family Life Skills is an intervention and prevention program that helps individuals to break free from the behavior that can cause strained, broken or abusive relationships. In Hays, I visited the Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Center where I met with staff and program director, Charlotte Lisner. I appreciate the efforts of New Start Family Life Skills and Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Center for helping make a difference.

Before Congress adjourned at the end of September, I gave a speech recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness month. To read the speech, [click here](#).

Visiting the Kansas Bureau of Investigation Laboratory in Great Bend

On Friday, Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline joined me at the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) laboratory in Great Bend to tour the facility and announce a grant of \$148,084. The KBI Great Bend office will convert storage space into new lab space, nearly doubling the previous amount of lab space available. The grant will be used to upgrade DNA computer systems, purchase analytical equipment used in forensic analysis and enhance lab security. Thanks to KBI Director Larry Welch and KBI Director of Laboratory Mike VanStratton for showing us around the facility and explaining the future plans for the office.

Visiting Kansas Schools

Ellis: In Ellis, I joined Mr. Chris Rorabaugh's 8th grade history class at Ellis Junior High to talk about the Constitution. Our nation recently celebrated Constitution Day and I enjoyed the opportunity to visit about its importance to our nation.

Quinter: I joined Mrs. Kelly Getz's senior government class at Quinter High School on Thursday. I enjoyed visiting with the students and thank Principal Tucker Woolsey for the opportunity. Also while in Quinter, I visited the Jamison Farm where they were having their annual fall Herford Female and Quarter Horse production sale.

WaKeeney: I stopped at the WaKeeney Head Start program at Trego Grade School this week. I enjoyed talking to the students, as well as with the director, Terry Schoenthaler, and pre-school teacher, Bev Armbruster.

Hays: On Thursday, I joined 4th and 5th grade students at O'Loughlin Elementary School in

Hays for the student ambassador meeting. Thank you to Principal Nancy Harman for the invitation to join this group of about 40 students to talk about leadership.

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LaCrosse: I joined Mr. Aaron Law's senior government class at LaCrosse High School on Friday to visit with the students about current events. Thanks to Principal Kathy Keeley for the opportunity to visit the school.

Visiting Kansas Health Care Facilities

Minneapolis: I visited the Ottawa County Health Center in Minneapolis on Tuesday and appreciate the time Administrator Joy Johnson spent visiting with me and showing me the facility.

Hoisington: I visited Clara Barton Hospital in Hoisington this week. While there, I toured the facility and met with Jim Blackwell, Chief Financial Officer and interim Chief Executive Officer. It was a good opportunity to visit about health care services in the Hoisington area.

Visiting Kansas Communities

Bennington: This week, I stopped in Bennington where I visited West Side Grocery, Farmers Coop, Bennington State Bank, City Hall, the Twin Valley School District office, Post Office and Davidson Insurance.

Park: I also visited the community of Park this week where I stopped at the Post Office, Billinger Repair and Park Oil Company.

Lincolnvile: This weekend, I attended the Octoberfest Parade in Lincolnvile. Thanks to Bob and Arlene Kleinschmidt for driving me in the Main Street parade. After the parade, I toured the new Community Building that was dedicated this summer.

Hays: I enjoyed attending the Hays High School Homecoming football game against Dodge City on Friday evening. On Saturday, I attended the Army Reserve Center grand opening in Hays. Lieutenant Colonel Leonel Herrera gave me a tour of the new facility. LTC Herrera is the Commander of the 388th Medical Logistics Battalion, which is the group based out of the new Hays Reserve facility.

In the Office

In the office this week as part of a future leaders of Kansas banking program were Joshua Dechant and Dwane and Sandy Timm of Goodland; Paul Bures and Chuck Stones of Topeka; Matt Taylor and Doug Wareham of Holton; Frank Carson, IV of Mulvane; Michael Ewy of Coffeyville; Matthew Lee of Satanta; Kelly Linnens of Florence; Steven Niemack of Lyndon; Tamarah Pruitt of Beloit; Alex Williams of Halstead; and Kathy Olsen of Leawood. In addition to touring the U.S. Capitol building, the group was in Washington, D.C., to learn how legislation is created and passed, as well as the most effective ways to communicate with Members of Congress.

Chelsey Huddleston of Frankfort and Michael Smith of Goodland were in with Family Career and Community Leaders of America to express their appreciation for the recent reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins program, which supports technical and career education programs. Walter Edward Neal of Kansas City was in with MO-ARK representatives to discuss water resource and flood control projects along the Missouri and Kansas Rivers. Jara Strickland of Garden City was in to talk about her experience in the Congressional Youth Leadership Council program.

Several Kansans were in my office this week for a tour of the United States Capitol building. Tim Carmichael and Ken Degraffenried of Haven and Dean Holbert of Concordia were in, as were James Murphy and Ronald and Anne Burgess of Stafford. Gary and Kathy Morgan and Don Steffes of McPherson were in for a tour, as were Donald and Barbara Pruitt of Beloit with their daughter, Belinda Childs, of Wichita. Also in were Mack Wiens of Topeka and Sharon Lacey of Topeka. Mack was in town visiting his son, Jason, who works in my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry